

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, November 4, 1999, at 11 a.m., in Dirksen Room 226, to conduct a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet on November 4, 1999, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., in Dirksen 562 for the purpose of conducting a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONFERENCE REPORT FOR INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FY 2000

• Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the Senate passed the conference agreement for the Interior appropriations bill on October 21, 1999. Although this conference report was approved by unanimous consent, I wanted to express my objections to the amount of excessive pork-barrel spending and extraneous legislative riders included in this final agreement.

In late September, the Senate passed an Interior bill that included \$217 million in wasteful and unnecessary spending. This new conference agreement has taken pork-barrel spending to higher proportions by adding an additional \$140 million in earmarks that either were not included in the Senate or House bill, or increased funding levels for certain projects at levels far above the requested amounts.

I am constantly amazed by tactics used by my colleagues to attach earmarks for parochial projects that have not been authorized or that circumvent a fair and merit-review process. The conferees have even included report language that directs federal agencies to fund targeted earmarks included in the conference report prior to distributing general allocated funds to the rest of the country.

In my review of the final conference report, I have identified numerous earmarks and riders that are included in a list of objectionable provisions that is available on my Senate webpage. I remind my colleagues that I do not object to these projects based on their merit nor do I intend to belittle the importance of specific projects to local communities. My objections are based on issues of fairness and following established procedures to consider budgetary items as well as a undergoing a separate legislative process for policy and statutory changes to our federal laws. Unfortunately, the conferees have been able to side-step our established budget and legislative rules by utilizing deceptive wording and budget gimmickry.

For example, this conference report includes an extra \$22 million in designated "emergency" funding for certain areas in the State of Alaska. This funding was not considered in either the Senate or House bills, but added during last-minute negotiations. Again, I certainly understand economic hardships facing rural Alaskans, but why is funding economic projects such as building a regional shipyard, a larger fishing dock, as well as converting a pulp mill to a Coca Cola bottling plant, of higher priority than addressing important land and resources management issues that are intended to be paid for through the Interior appropriations bill? This added "emergency" spending, despite that fact that it will purportedly not count against budget cap restrictions, will still be paid for by the taxpayers.

Also added in this conference report is an entirely new title that includes legislation, the "Mississippi National Forest Improvement Act of 1999," which had not previously considered in the previous Senate or House bills. Furthermore, emergency funding of \$68 million is provided for the "United Mine Workers of America" benefit fund, also not previously included in either the Senate or House versions of the Interior appropriations bills.

The conferees have targeted funding for projects that provide little detail as to their overall national priority or merit. For example, \$300,000 that was originally dedicated for a Forest Service regional office is instead directed to be earmarked for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems at the Forest Products Labs in Wisconsin. Language is included to provide for specific acquisition of a high band radio system for the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. While these maintenance improvements may very well be necessary, is this the type of projects that deserve funding above other important land, forest and wildlife priorities?

Much of this wasteful spending could be directed toward other priorities and programs that allow states and local communities to prioritize their own needs at the local level, such as the State-side program of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. I, along with several of my colleagues, have supported prioritizing the State-side program of the Land and Water Conservation Fund as a program that provides federal resources for projects that are considered fairly and competitively. The conferees agreed to provide \$20 million to the State-side program for the first time in many years, but this level is less than the \$30 million approved by the Senate and far below what is necessary to address locally identified needs. Unfortunately, the State-side program, and many other programs that fund projects based on merit and national priority, are penalized due to other low-priority and special interest spending as part of this conference report.

Mr. President, each year the conferees utilize the appropriations process to tack on legislative riders that either were not considered through a legislative process or added with the intention to delay important policy and regulatory changes. Many environmental and land management laws cannot be updated or reviewed when legislative riders are included that prohibit any action by federal agencies to proceed with a fair and comprehensive review of impacts on our natural resources. A few of the these riders include:

A delay in promulgating rules to update oil valuation royalty assessments for oil drilled on federal lands;

A two-year exemption for certain mining companies who utilize public lands for purposes of storing mine waste;

A year-long delay for surface management regulations governing hardrock mining; and,

A continuing moratorium on Indian tribal P.L. 93-638 Indian Self-Determination Contracts that allow direct management and funding for tribally operated programs.

I support an open and fair review of our laws that govern public lands and resources, but we cannot fully evaluate the fairness and appropriateness of proposed changes when legislative riders such as these put a halt to our congressional review.

Mr. President, there is no doubt that important land, forest and Native American programs will continue to be supported through this annual funding bill. Unfortunately, many communities across this country will not receive the critical resources they need because of the continuing and unfair practice of pork-barrel spending. This year, our American taxpayers will pay the tab for \$357 million in parochial and low-priority spending. •

RESPECT MONTH

• Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, both the State of Michigan and the City of Detroit have proclaimed the month of October "Respect Month" for the past decade and October 30th "Respect Your Neighborhood Day". These designations give us the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the many daily acts of service, that sometimes go unnoticed, but are so vital to binding our communities and nation together with harmony and unity. Over the last month, organizations and schools in Michigan took the opportunity to give young people a greater acceptance of the similarities and differences of others.

The principle of respect is especially important in the aftermath of last school year's shootings. While our nation is focused on creating an atmosphere free from fear and violence, it is important to pause and reflect on our respect for one another. Respect is a valuable lesson for the schools who are struggling to repair the damage these